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ABSTRACT

The five essays included in this document focus on the First IMPACT II Teacher Policy Institute (50 New York City Public School teachers "committed to affecting real change in educational policy in this city"). "Teachers as Researchers" (Mark Silberberg) discusses the relationship between teaching and research, particularly with regard to policy formation. "The Envisioning Process" (Donna Mehle) describes the Policy Institute's experience in developing a group vision. "Teacher Policy Institute Vision Statement" (Benna Golubtchik, Donna Mehle and Linda Steinmann, Compilers) includes the following topics: the school, school and community, the process of learning, diversity, accountability, and teacher professionalism. "School-Based Survey Project" (Theresa London Cooper and Peter Dillon) explains the data gathering by institute participants in their own schools in order to raise awareness and start building consensus for policy change. Survey findings, changes that took place or are taking place, and some of the problems that were encountered, as well as some of the concerns about school-based survey projects and the conclusions drawn about making policy changes are discussed. "Donors Education Collaborative Planning Process" (Steve Williams) describes the participation by eight fellows of the Teacher Policy Institute in the Donors Education Collaborative project to design a 2-5 year program to build the constituency for public school reform. (ND)

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Teachers as Frontline Researchers and Policy Makers— A Midyear Perspective from the First IMPACT II Teacher Policy Institute

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Teachers as Researchers
by Mark Silberberg

Teachers are researchers. They are engaged, on a daily basis, in the exploration of effective methodologies for increasing student achievement. The teaching experience itself is grounded in the constant exploration and reevaluation of practice. Effective teaching requires that teachers continually examine the parameters that define the nature of their relationships with students, parents, colleagues, and the structure of their work environment. Moreover, this research orientation may have significant policy implications for the school within which a given teacher works. However, it is important to note that this orientation to research is generally conducted on an intuitive level and not in the pragmatic and formal manner that is characteristic of academic research. As teachers begin to cultivate more formal skills in formulating research questions and conducting school-based research projects, the potential for increasing the efficacy of teacher-initiated policy recommendations at the school and system level should also increase.

Along with the importance of evaluating teaching practice and the environments in which it occurs, the need for developing purposeful and creative initiatives in education cannot be underestimated. To the extent that teachers themselves are permitted an active voice in this conversation, a major gap between the policy community and teachers, who must find ways to make policy consistent with effective practice, may be bridged. Implicit in this idea is an understanding that teaching is more than an application of predefined methodologies. It is simultaneously an intellectual, political, and managerial activity. As such, teachers should be seen as an important voice in the matrix from which emerge policy decisions and allocations for the planning, design, implementation, and assessment of educational reform efforts. The only reasonable conclusion that can be reached is that teachers must be seen as an important contributing part of the policy community and not merely as a medium through which policy is implemented.

Teaching, as a practice, almost always requires revision and modification of some initial plan. Research and policy initiatives often fail to take this into account. Policy makers and researchers must be responsive to the context in which they are working. Since the "policy spaces" in question here are the schools themselves and it is teachers themselves who must ultimately find ways to fit policy to a given "policy space," the degree to which teachers are able to participate in the ongoing policy debate may have a significant impact on the extent to which policy can be successfully implemented in schools. Despite a wide diversity in teaching styles and methodological orientations, nearly all educators share a common perspective about the purposefulness of their work. Underlying teacher professionalism is a desire to have a meaningful and significant impact upon the actions and thinking of students. However, in order to achieve this goal, teachers must also be willing to expand the scope of their policy and action roles. The likelihood of policy being successfully implemented at the school level depends upon policy makers' recognition that two of the key determinants in the successful adoption of policy are the

social and political contexts in which the policies are to be undertaken. Consequently, to implement successful policy, policy makers need to continually assess the social ecology and stakeholder interests present in a given arena over which a given policy is to have an impact. Allowing teachers to serve as an intermediary between the real-world settings of schools which are characterized by multiple and often conflicting interests and the development of policy itself seems a necessary precondition for the successful implementation of education policy.

It should be clear that while we are arguing for an increased role for teachers in the research and policy community, we are by no means arguing that these areas should be the sole domain of teachers. Rather, we are arguing that because research and policy claims increasingly impinge on the decisions that teachers make in their schools and classrooms, teachers must come to be seen as partners in this debate. While the contributions of professional researchers and policy makers are essential, individuals at the school level have to be able to define what information and policy recommendations are relevant and, at the same time, provide a methodologically sound basis for action in a given setting. In either case, those who produce research findings and policy directives and those who utilize them, must have a common set of criteria with which these claims can be evaluated. A teacher may not need to evaluate the specific techniques for collecting data, but the teacher does need some basis for assessing whether the findings are reliable. This is an important area in which professional researchers, policy makers, and teachers must establish an ongoing dialogue.

If teachers are to become producers of research and policy then they will need to understand how to evaluate claims because to produce knowledge in either of these domains requires building on previous work in a selective and critical manner. At the very least, being a sophisticated consumer of educational research findings and policy recommendations is prerequisite to making a useful contribution in either of these areas. It is only when the specific act of teaching and its relation to the structure of schools and schooling becomes the subject of inquiry that the teacher is afforded an opportunity to view his or her work from a wholly different perspective. In doing so, the teaching context can become a variable to be manipulated and examined rather than simply be taken as a given. When the teacher sees his or her work within the context of a research question to be examined or a policy recommendation to be pursued, the opportunity for reflection on the meaning of practice and purpose becomes possible. In this manner, like their counterparts in the academic community, teachers can begin to contextualize specific problems, identify and implement strategies to address these problems, design evaluation procedures, formalize interventions, and most important document and disseminate the process and findings of their work to other researchers and policy makers. Approached from this paradigm, teaching practice becomes action-oriented and therefore transformative, not only for the individual teacher but also potentially for the school and school system within which that teacher works.

As teachers are asked to engage in policy making at the school level (e.g., school-based management, school-based planning), the ability to collect and evaluate school data will

be a necessary precondition to implementing and assessing the effectiveness of policy decisions. The degree to which teachers can effectively conduct research in a systematic and communicable fashion will be imperative. Currently, much of what becomes school policy emerges out of anecdotal experience and often fails to capture the underlying complexities of a given problem (e.g., a school might decide on a particular policy to deal with an attendance problem without adequately investigating the specific causes of the problem). As teachers begin to explore, through research, the various levels of interaction that define a given school culture and the effectiveness of existing policy, they will be better able to address policy that is oriented toward the long-term as well as immediate structural change within a school setting. Too often policy in schools is reactive and as such addresses symptoms and not causes. As teachers begin to explore the nature of specific causes they will be better able to address policy that is proactive and consistent with meeting objectives as they are defined in school visions.

As teachers take tentative first steps towards conducting research and making policy recommendations in their own schools, a profound transformation will begin to take place at the level of understanding between knowledge and practice. Since social life constantly demands either individual or collective decisions that deal with social phenomena, the more these decisions are based on knowledge, the better they are likely to be. In making decisions regarding schools and schooling, teachers must evaluate the alternatives, not only in terms of their own preferences, but in terms of the consequences of choosing each alternative. When there is knowledge available, teachers will be better able to anticipate the consequences, providing they can evaluate the knowledge. Teachers who have had experience conducting research and developing policy will be in a better position to evaluate existing knowledge and ideas about what is best for their schools. Much is said these days about developing constructivist classrooms in which students explore, investigate, and research content that had been formerly dispensed by the classroom teacher. In doing so, students develop skills that are transferable to a much broader social and intellectual canvass. What we are suggesting here is a shifting of this paradigm whereby teachers, through engaging in research and policy making initiatives, become constructivist teachers transforming the schools and school systems in which they work. On a more fundamental level, one consequence of the development of research and policy making skills among teachers is a necessary expansion of the ability of teachers to confront critically the problems with which their schools are confronted. In cultivating a teacher sensitive to the implications of research and policy on schools and schooling, critical reasoning will be our most important tool. If we are to achieve our objective of reforming schools to better serve their various stakeholders, we cannot read passively, accepting arguments and memorizing slogans or recipes for policy and practice. Applying critical reason will teach us what to judge, how to judge it, and most important when to reserve judgment.

The Envisioning Process
by Donna Mehle

"Where there is no vision, the people perish."
— Proverbs 29: 18

NOTE: All quotes that follow come from Teacher Policy Institute fellows' writings.

The above quote is a biblical reminder that any group of people or institution cannot evolve without a vision. Survive, maybe, but certainly not flourish. We don't even have to go as far back as biblical times to appreciate the validity of this idea. We are learning from current educational reform efforts that a newly created school cannot succeed without some type of vision that the staff shares. School experiments may be attempted without a vision, but they will certainly not creatively evolve or affect real change on a wider scale.

As the Teacher Policy Institute of IMPACT II, we are 50 New York City Public School teachers committed to affecting real change in educational policy in this city. We came together last September to begin our year's work of discussing the dynamics of educational policymaking. We are in the process of identifying and researching policy issues that require change with the goal of drafting a document that will provide the clear articulation of policy goals, needs, and actions.

We have undertaken a big agenda. One that could "start with a bang and end with a fizzle" if not rooted in something substantial. One that requires a strong vision. That is why the staff of IMPACT II kicked off our year together with a weekend devoted to writing, talking, and collaborating on our visions for the future of education.

But where does a vision come from? It sounds like something that visits a mystic in a dream. For us, it comes from the hundreds of years experience we teachers have collectively in public school classrooms. All that we needed to evoke these visions were the luxury of time, our thoughtful colleagues' ears, and a process. Convinced of this, the staff of IMPACT II provided us with just those things over the course of that weekend.

We began this process by considering why we are teachers. The staff had a notion that the inspirations which have led us and keep us where we "see, hear, (feel), and smell what the youngsters are about" might move us to envision how the educational process could inspire teachers and students in the year 2020. We wrote about our inspirations and then traded stories in small groups to nods, laughs, and sighs.

Recently we re-visited these inspirations in preparation for writing this paper, and they seem to fall into four categories. First of all, it is the students themselves who inspire us. When we see "glimpses of beauty in a student sharing a talent" or are flabbergasted by a first grader's stream of "Why's?" we feel renewed and energized by our classrooms. Secondly, it is other teachers who inspire us. These can be novice teachers who are our

colleagues, or favorite teachers from our educational past like Mr. Holland. We can even inspire ourselves with our rich experiences and journeys of lifelong learning.

Collaboratively working with others provides a third strong source of inspiration for many of us as well. This might not have been true if our writings were collected in September, since many of us work in schools where there is little collegial support and dialogue. However, we have been surprised at how stimulating eight hours of work on a Saturday every month can be after a "long, exhausting and difficult week at school." There seems to be an enormous energizing force in working alongside colleagues through the process of "finding exactly the right words to convey what we meant in our vision work."

Finally change itself is invigorating. When we see that teachers can make changes "in a system that is not working" or "see actual examples of successful policy cases," our "heart- pounding hope that (we) could truly contribute" is confirmed.

When we finished sharing our inspirations in September, we were asked to write about and discuss in groups of two our deepest concerns about our students, classrooms, and schools.

We re-visited these concerns in preparation for this paper. It is unclear as to whether they have shifted as a result of the work we've done over the past five months. They can be categorized as follows.

Many of us question how we can best serve our students. Confronted with their diverse needs, backgrounds, and learning styles, we as educators aren't always certain about how to meet all these needs "in a meaningful way."

Additionally we worry about our students' lives outside the classroom. Given the difficult conditions in which many of them live, we recognize how the teacher's question, "Why don't you have your homework?" seems absurd at times.

Issues of equity in both resources and expectations are important to us. Many of us teach in inner-city schools that receive less funding than schools in wealthier neighborhoods. We perceive a "complacency that (our) kids can't reach high standards" and an "unwillingness to commit the resources" to enable that to happen.

In a broader way, we are distressed about how our society views education, its children and teachers. We worry about a society that "cannot come together to decide what we want our kids to know and do" and we experience a strong need to "make people look afresh at the idea, so obvious, that our children...are our most important cause." In addition we seldom perceive "respectful, professional treatment of teachers."

We question how teachers are educated and sometimes wonder if "teachers are really prepared to teach."

Connected to how we prepare teachers is our concern with how teachers work. We feel there is not enough time in our day for reflection and collaboration and a climate conducive to "having input into school governance" does not exist in many schools. Those teachers who do take leadership roles sometimes wind up being overworked and burnt out.

Finally many of us expressed concern about our ability to affect real change. On a basic level, we worry whether our work in this institute will have genuine impact. This ranges from wondering if we can develop "policy that is concrete" to doubting whether we can obtain "policy makers' commitment to implement our recommendations," to questioning whether we can "produce a consensus document with value and purpose." On another level, how do we find a process that is "effective in establishing collaboration with persons of opposing views" to "benefit the educational process"? Finally, some of us distrust our own ability "to sustain this work." Can we "maintain our own commitment to educating children at a level that makes us feel satisfied in spite of the exhaustion...from working in a huge bureaucracy"?

We returned the next day to design our individual visions for education in the year 2020 that would address our deepest concerns and hopefully draw on what inspires us. We doodled, diagrammed, and drafted these visions on newsprint, posted them for our colleagues to read, and then began the uncomfortable process of forming vision groups based upon what our colleagues had created. We spent time walking around the room and jotting down the names of fellow institute participants with whom we sensed some similarity of vision. We were encouraged to keep this process fluid and flexible in the wake of our social need to "get a group." This was a messy, unnerving, and ultimately educational process.

Once our initial groups formed we were asked to draft a group vision statement. Along with this we were to consider the central theme, indicators, consequences, and assumptions associated with our vision. This work continued beyond that weekend in sub-group meetings during the following month. In October, we presented our work and received feedback from our colleagues as well as from Norm Fruchter, co-director of the Institute for Education and Social Policy, New York University School of Education. We then returned to our vision groups and continued drafting our statements over the course of the next couple of months. In January we submitted our visions to the members of the writing committee who undertook the challenge of synthesizing them into a cohesive whole. In February we reviewed what the writing committee produced and submitted our recommendations. What follows is the most current version of the Teacher Policy Institute Vision Statement.

Teacher Policy Institute Vision Statement

Compiled by Benna Golubtchik, Donna Mehle, and Linda Steinmann

1. The School

Schools are small, distinctive, and intimate communities which share a common vision and are governed collaboratively and inclusively, with essential issues decided at the school level. In this environment, all constituents are alternately learners and mentors. Those with knowledge and experience in any given area share their learning with those who have less knowledge and experience in that area. School administrators are instructional and organizational leaders who model excellence in education. Since all participants have a variety of learning experiences, the constant process of give and take capitalizes on the strengths of each member.

2. School and Community

The community encompasses both the school itself and the group of people who have agreed on some common set of values. This group includes students, families, staff, and others who have a stake in a collective endeavor. Their goal is to promote personal growth while strengthening society. Government, school systems, businesses, citizens, and parents seek equity of opportunity and a fair allocation of resources. Available funding guarantees access for each school to state of the art technology.

3. The Process of Learning

Learners follow a path of self-actualization with the goals set by the individual, either independently or with guidance. The participants in the process are sensitive to the differences in learning styles which are influenced by a variety of personal, cultural, and intellectual experiences.

Learning is problem-based, authentic, and student-centered, and focuses on the life-long process of intellectual and social growth. To that end, learning takes place using authentic resources and technology both inside and outside the school building. Teachers and students are proficient in the use of technology to communicate, collaborate, conduct research, and design projects.

4. Diversity

There is universal acceptance of the diversity of our human family, and all have equal opportunity to achieve their potential. An atmosphere of respect and a celebration of the variety of cultures is present in the supportive community which nurtures and guides each person. Equity of opportunity assures that all will be appreciated for their individuality and judged by their character and the quality of their skills and accomplishments.

The student body and staff are heterogeneous academically and socially. A plurality of educational models is required because the needs of learners and of their community vary.

5. Accountability

Schools are publicly accountable to the community because their success impacts everyone's future. The goals of both the learners and the community are interdependent. Businesses and governmental agencies join parents and educators in guiding the students in the skills that they need to become productive contributors. Learning outcomes are based on developing worthwhile skills. Ownership and responsibility are shared by all participants in the process. Standards for schools are developed in a continuum of dialogue between educators and the community. Schools are active in the process of setting standards and they adapt their activities to address the clear goals set on the local and national levels.

6. Teachers Professionalism

Teacher preparation, certification, selection, and evaluation are part of an ongoing process of reassessment and improvement. Teachers, as artisans, are given more autonomy and greater choice in exercising their responsibilities. They are supported by collegial networks for professional assessment and peer review. As facilitators of their students' learning, they are highly skilled and knowledgeable professionals. In collaboration with others, they are responsible for their own continued growth and development. Teachers participate in educational research and publication and the design and implementation of teacher education programs. They serve community needs by facilitating ongoing adult education programs, and student service learning and outreach. Educators maintain significant involvement in policy development and decision making in their own schools, as well as at the local, state, and federal levels. Teachers organize into a professional union with a national voice. The union is dedicated to improving the art and craft of teaching and learning.

School-Based Survey Project

by Theresa London Cooper and Peter Dillon

On Saturday, September 16, 1995, 50 teachers met to kick off the first Teacher Policy Institute organized in the United States. The institute centers around the notion that teachers should have a voice in policy issues that impact upon educating our youth and preparing them for the 21st century.

Early in the Teacher Policy Institute it seemed important to ground our vision and policy work in our own school contexts. Consequently, the fellows of the institute were charged with the task of changing a policy within the context of our schools that would create a positive impact. Duly noted, generally, teachers work within a system whereby policy affects us and we do not effect policy. How does one initiate changes in policy? What is the most efficient approach to collecting data? Who will the key people be in policy changes? Who is interested in changing policy? What will some of the possible barriers be in making policy changes? These are but a few questions we, the fellows, grappled with as we proceeded to move forward with the charge.

Questioning was the beginning of understanding the processes involved in policymaking for us. Going back to our schools to share ideas and gather information afforded a range of possibilities. We were making our colleagues aware of our work. We hoped their involvement would support our final document and presentation in October of 1996. We were rethinking the role of policy on the school level. We were gathering information in our schools to inform our broader policy work. Lastly, we were starting a dialogue. Eventually, that dialogue led to a surprising number of concrete changes in the schools in which we teach.

In the next few pages, I will discuss the approaches that 50 teachers took in gathering information, the initial findings, changes that took place or are taking place, and some of the problems we encountered. I will also discuss some of the concerns about our school-based survey project and the conclusion we have drawn about making policy changes.

Approaches

While each of the 50 teachers approached the school-based survey project differently, we shared some common ground in trying to get at policy issues in our schools. The one-on-one interviews were conducted via telephone, in person, or in writing. The verbal interviews ranged from being rather informal, much like a conversation, to being more structured. They were based on the following guiding questions:

- Do you feel that you are aware of most of the policies operating at our school?
- Are there any policies with which you are concerned?
- What policy changes or additions would you suggest?

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- Do you feel that you have the power to change these policies?
- What are your three major concerns about our school?

The written questionnaires also ranged from being rather informal, based on two or three broad questions, to being rather specific, including an inventory of 20 pointed questions. Some teachers asked about policy in general, others were concerned about policy in New York City, and yet others developed questions in response to specific existing policies in their schools, like the recent emphasis on writing process, school-wide grading, lunchroom procedures, and security procedures for school visitors. However, most teachers used a questionnaire format with at leas five questions.

As data collectors, we sampled a wide range of participants in the educational process. One teacher spoke individually with all the staff in his building. Another teacher spoke with an entire department. Yet another teacher sampled 250 staff in his building. Many teachers initiated the surveying process with their principals, often getting permission, and then moved on to the other key players including assistant principals, guidance counselors; the union chapter chairperson; classroom, cluster, and ESL teachers; family workers; secretaries; educational evaluators; lunchroom and custodial staff; school psychologists; youth advisors; students; and parents.

Findings

Before sharing our initial findings, it's important to note that many teachers responded to questions in the strictest confidence. Policy and school change are difficult things. While the stakes of change are tremendously high for the growth of students, many teachers expressed a need for anonymity in critiquing problematic situations. At the same time, many teachers publicly embraced the need for reform.

Like our approaches, the findings ranged from being rather broad to being very specific. They seem to fit into the following categories: administrators' concerns, teachers' concerns, parents' concerns, students' concerns, and specific curricular and process concerns.

For many, policy is abstract. It causes a great deal of confusion. It comes from the state or 110 Livingston Street. There is no impacting it. For others, policy is more what happens at the school level. There seems to be concern over the gap between philosophy and action. Policy seems intimately connected to the roles of various participants.

Administrators, particularly principals, expressed a lack of control over policy. Many feel pressure from the top down. Some reveled in their relative power. A few principals were afraid of opening the Pandora's box of policy discussions with teachers.

Teachers overwhelmingly expressed their frustration. Some were afraid of principals. Many others felt a lack of voice. Some felt powerless, and others felt empowered. Many

teachers felt pulled in different directions. Some expressed dismay at a lack of structure; other were proud of creating structure. While some teachers were skeptical about the prospect of policy change, surprisingly, most teachers expressed the desire to work for change.

Parents and students felt largely left out of the educational process. They described the lack of opportunities for them to get involved. Students were particularly concerned about school environment.

A tremendous number of policies surfaced. Discipline and safety, class size and materials, Regents examinations and curriculum, illiteracy and promotion, and the wearing of hats by students are examples of specific concerns. Teachers took those concerns and many others and went back to their schools aware enough to start change processes.

Changes

Change doesn't come easily. Teachers who attempted change struggled with barriers including: the all-important budget, existing policies, and people—particularly people in power who are reluctant to change.

A few teachers from the institute didn't attempt change. Others fell victim to the inertia of the status quo. A few were paid lip service or ignored by principals.

Many teachers are involved in ongoing discussions. One commented, "We're on the verge of a revolution. I can feel it." Others encouraged principals to change. One principal is asking for more teacher input. Another principal is addressing the generation gap between older and younger teachers. And one principal agreed to come to a Teacher Policy Institute conference in March.

Many teachers spoke of an increasing sense of teacher openness or self-reliance. Some implemented specific policies. One teacher got a school to change its scheduling to four-week blocks. Another teacher helped develop a lateness/absence policy. Another teacher wrote a homework policy and is working with parents through the school's teacher center. Another teacher is involving parents in technology. One teacher is able to park in the schoolyard on snowy days. Yet another has formed a grant writing committee. And one teacher, fed up with walls of resistance, has decided to run for union chapter chairperson.

Concerns

Although our methods of surveying did not adhere to the standards of formal quantitative research, we did gain real information that has helped us make a qualitative difference in our schools.

Fifty teachers approached gathering data in the ways we believed would yield the most productive responses as we investigated, analyzed, and reflected on the processes of changing policy. We struggled with a low response rate, but we knew that this is not uncommon. As one fellow commented, "I gained influence among my staff, but the survey did not help me at all. My survey was too general." One might wonder, though, if the influence he now holds would have been forthcoming had he not conducted the survey. There seems to have been some indirect, unanticipated benefits to our having conducted the survey. Perhaps because they were less burdensome for our staff, conducting personal interviews seemed most effective.

We proceed with caution. It would not be prudent to make many generalizations about our discoveries, but that is not the goal of our research. We gathered information in a way that raised awareness and started building consensus for policy change. While a few teachers started that work earlier and expressed frustration and disinterest in doing it again, our school-based survey project provoked dialogue that is now continuing and vital to the process of changing policy. We're taking teacher action research to another level by involving teachers together in discussions not only in, but also outside, their classrooms.

Conclusion

Obviously, we don't claim to have all the answers. However, as James Baldwin stated, "That which is faced cannot always be changed, but that which is not faced can never be changed." In our efforts to influence policy changes in our own schools, and eventually throughout the nation, we must realize that change requires patience, cooperation, collaboration, a shared vision, diligence, and ongoing, open dialogue and assessment. The policymaking process requires participation by all who have a stake in preparing today's students and tomorrow's leaders. It requires us to form partnerships with other professionals who can assist us in change. It is a painstaking process that requires commitment and focus. One must learn how to question and retrieve the desired information in a environment of mistrust. One must also consider how people would best like to respond to questions, for example, by writing, talking, thinking, and responding now or later. It is also important to understand the psychology of power and pressure and how it affects people. To that end, we, the fellows of the first Teacher Policy Institute, have concluded that we must seize the opportunity to change things and understand that we have the power to make a difference.

Donors Education Collaborative Planning Process
by Steve Williams

After establishing our visions of what we'd like our schools to be, and having gathered information to ascertain our school communities' concerns surrounding policy issues, the logical next step is action and actually initiating reform strategies. It is toward this end that eight fellows in the Teacher Policy Institute have become involved in a planning process with IMPACT II, which we are calling the School and Community Project. Sponsored by the Donors Education Collaborative, the purpose of this process is to design a two- to five- year program that will build constituency for public school reform.

The Donors Education Collaborative (DEC) is a consortium of grantmaking institutions that include the Booth Ferris Foundation, Robert Sterling Clark Foundation, The Aaron Diamond Foundation, The Ford Foundation, The Greenwall Foundation, J.P. Morgan Charitable Trust, The New York Community Trust, The Pinkerton Foundation, Charles H. Revson Foundation, Rockefeller Brothers Foundation, The Rockefeller Foundation, Nate B. and Frances Spingold Foundation, and The Travelers Foundation.

DEC is seeking to build an effective advocacy constituency to represent parents and children in the city's public school system to achieve systemic reform which involves not only transforming individual schools but the educational system itself. DEC's goals are to: a) strengthen the relationship between schools and community, b) generate policy analysis to inform and encourage public dialogue, c) identify and work toward implementing needed changes in educational policies and practices that will improve learning and achievement for all children, and d) build and sustain public participation, new partnerships, and greater civic commitment to the improvement of our public schools.

Clearly, the opportunity for the fellows of the Teacher Policy Institute, through IMPACT II, to participate in the Donors' Education Collaborative effort seems serendipitous. In the School and Community Project, the fellows are provided with the possibility of extending our work beyond our yearlong institute, and the knowledge and skills we are developing as a result of the institute will prepare us to make a major contribution to this effort.

The eight fellows were selected to participate in this project through a competitive application process in which we described how our proposed program would serve the goals of DEC. Each teacher selected was charged with holding a meeting with representatives of key constituencies—parent, civic, business, community groups—who would be involved in the development of the program if funded beyond the planning process. We are now refining our individual proposals to be submitted to IMPACT II later this month, and then by IMPACT II to DEC in May. Plans range from implementing parent and staff development programs in order to assist students in

improving their academic achievement to expanding the use of school technologies for the school and surrounding community.

Here are several examples of the programs we are developing:

I'll start with mine. The primary focus of our program will be to increase the participation of the community in Middle School 2, in the East Flatbush/Crown Heights section of Brooklyn. To achieve this end, we have decided to use a theme, "Exploring and Understanding Diversity in Our Community." This theme will provide the framework for developing a concrete policy to address and reach the following goals:

1. Understand, explore, and appreciate the diversity in our community.
2. Increase tolerance and understanding of conflict through mediation.
3. Increase the involvement of community groups (e.g., churches, businesses, planning boards, museums) in the education of students at Middle School 2.
4. Increase public knowledge of the cultural diversity and richness of the community.
5. Improve instruction and achievement using a multicultural perspective and focus.
6. Expand and develop the existing technology (computers labs and television studio) as an integral component to help disseminate information and educate the community.

Each goal will be reached through the use of strategies that will promote the active participation of all parties (i.e., students, parents, teachers, administrative and ancillary staff members, community organizations and groups, and businesses).

We intend to use the following strategies to facilitate this involvement:

a) Public forums where invited speakers and participants can discuss issues related to diversity and the resulting misunderstandings that might arise.
b) Collaborative efforts with churches, businesses, and museums to create an instructional program that highlights and informs all participants of issues related to diversity and its effects.
c) Special festivals and days to focus participants on the issues of diversity, mediation, and even on the possible careers that might exist in related fields.
d) Trips to visit cultural institutions as well as embassies that represent the members of our community to learn more about a particular country's culture.
e) The use of technology (i.e., on-line services, television studio, computers) as a vehicle for informing all members of our community. A special effort will be made to videotape all activities so that the information can be made readily accessible to other interested parties.

In short, we intend to create a dynamic, instructional focus that will help coalesce a divergent cultural community. The result of this project will be an effort to understand diversity and use it to help resolve conflict and misunderstandings that might result from it. It is hoped that the resulting increase in sensitivity to differences will produce the

kinds of change and reform everyone needs to be successful and a positive contributor to life in our community.

Linda Steinmann, another fellow who is participating in the School and Community Project, has named her effort "The Civic Corps." Linda's students at Forest Hills High School in Queens will be teaching U.S. Government and Civics to Russian newcomers. Her students' expertise in the U.S. Constitution have earned them prizes at the city and state level. In designing this tutoring program, Linda has partnered with Community School Board 6, Forest Hills Community House, the Forest Hills High School Parents Association, the Queens Jewish Community Center, the Russian American Parents Association, and the Service Center for Russian Immigrants.

Peggy Cancienne at P.S. 213 in Bayside, Queens is designing a program in which she, as the school's computer specialist, will provide training for parents and community members in using the computer. Her goal is to bring these adults, upon completion of their training, into the classroom to provide support for teaching children in multi-age groupings, a reform effort she is eager to introduce in her school.

Mark Grashow, a teacher at Abraham Lincoln High School in Coney Island, Brooklyn, has teamed up with a colleague at John Dewey High School and three teachers at local middle schools to develop a community service learning program that would provide meaningful placements for middle and high school students. Mark has reached out to over 30 Coney Island and Brighton Beach business, civic, and community groups as well as the local community board to participate in this program.

Judi Fenton of P.S. 127 in East Elmhurst, Queens, is tapping into the expertise of organizations in her community to provide professional development opportunities for teachers and enhance learning opportunities for students. Her school has a weather station and a satellite dish, but no one with the skills and knowledge to make use of these technologies. The school is also in the process of setting up a third computer lab. Judi is working with personnel at LaGuardia Airport, professsors from the College of Aeronautics, member of the Kiwanis Club, parents, and taxpayers to facilitate the training on the equipment.

The idea behind these initiatives is to enable collaborative groups to transform schools into cultural and educational facilities for the enrichment of the greater community. We all have visions of what we would like the future of our society and schools to be like. For teachers, that vision begins in the microcosm of the school. Our investigations suggest that parents, administrators, students, and teachers all hope for a school environment that enables all concerned to reach their greatest potential and achieve success. Schools are not factories, and neighborhoods are not just places to live. They are both places where visions can become realities and the future begins.